

from the northern neighbors until the roads could be opened in the early spring. In those days the roads were not as they are now. During the past few years the State has been constructing splendid roads and bridges into all parts of Utah, but in the early days they were often impassable, due to the mud and snows. Many a time were the passengers compelled to help the driver lift the coach out of some quagmire or rut; or if perchance the coach should tip over, as it sometimes did, hours were spent in mending the broken parts. Passengers in the hotels at Nephi, Provo, and Springville had to rise early, and by the light of a tallow dip, dress, and eat breakfast of home-cured ham and eggs. Relays were every fifteen or twenty miles, and the horses or mules were well fed. In winter sleighs were used, and the passengers were snugly placed in the bottom of the box in clean straw. Buffalo-robies covered them and kept them warm.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE UNITED STATES MAIL TO UTAH BEFORE
THE RAILROAD

How Letters Were Carried in Early Days.—In the early days when the West was being explored, letters were sent back to the "States" in the care of fur-traders and others who might meet an emigrant train bound for the far West. As a rule the letters were always safely posted in Fort Leavenworth or St. Louis; and mail for those who had gone into the wilderness was intrusted to emigrants bound for the Rocky Mountains, Oregon, or California. After the coming of the first company of pioneers to Utah, in 1847, there was hardly a time when there was not some company on the plains headed for Utah. The members of each company naturally carried letters and "word" to those who had preceded them. Then from Salt Lake men went out, every month or oftener, to the East and to California, and they were the messenger-bearers to friends. In 1855 a young man who had driven an ox-team across the plains returned to the Missouri River and thence to New York. In his pocket was a little bundle of letters which he safely posted at Fort Leavenworth. He had carried the little bundle in his coat pocket, and had protected it from rain and stream.

When Brigham Young with his party left Salt Lake City for the Missouri River, in August, 1847, the people took advantage of the opportunity, and the returning pioneers took many letters back to the Winter Quarters for relatives and friends. The first letter sent from the Salt Lake Valley was written on August 2, and signed by Brigham Young. The

*"The Founding
of Utah," — Levi Edgar Young*

First Mail Contract.—The discovery of gold in California in the later forties and the great overland migration to the Pacific coast in 1849 necessitated the establishment of a mail route across the continent west of the Missouri River. In

1850 the "Great Salt Lake Mail" route was established from the Missouri River to Salt Lake City. The contract for carrying the mail was awarded to Samuel H. Woodson, of Independence, Mo. It was a monthly service by stage, for which the contractor received about \$20,000 a year from the Government. The route was about 1,200 miles long, and after 1850, the Oregon trail was the highway for the United States mail-coaches. Woodson contracted with Salt Lake men to carry the mail to and from Fort Laramie, in Wyoming, where the mail from Independence was met and exchanged. The mail could not always be depended on, however, and often the governor of Utah Territory was compelled to send out a special messenger to the Missouri River to carry a bundle of mail and to bring back the letters addressed to Utah people. Thus, in the summer of 1850, Mr. John Y. Green was despatched to Council Bluffs for mail, and on the 15th of September Orson Hyde arrived with the mail from the Missouri River. A mail route was also established in 1850 which connected Sacramento with Salt Lake City. While the trips were intended to be made once a month, the mail was very irregular, and during the winter the trail over the Sierra Nevada Mountains was covered with snow many feet deep.

Little and Hanks, Mail Contractors.—In the summer of 1851 Feramor Little contracted to carry the mail between Salt Lake City and Laramie. With him were associated Ephraim Hanks and Charles F. Decker. Little and his men were expected to meet the mail from the East at Laramie on the 15th of each month. The only settlement between Laramie and Salt Lake City was Fort Bridger, which was 113 miles east of Salt Lake. A trading-post at Devil's Gate afterward kept animals for the mail service. Little and Hanks took their first mail over the route to Fort Laramie in the summer of 1851. They camped on the plains,

and though at times the Indians were somewhat hostile, they bravely faced the danger, and arrived at their destination on time. One night, the men put down their blankets in the road behind the wagon and went to sleep. Getting up in the morning, they discovered the tracks of a huge grizzly bear around where their heads had been. Mr. Little measured one of the tracks and found it to be thirteen inches long.

The November Trip of 1852.—On the 1st of November, 1852, Mr. Little left Salt Lake City with the mail. He was accompanied by a Canadian Frenchman named Contway and four other passengers. They arrived at Laramie on the 15th. The Eastern mail had not arrived, on account of the heavy storms, and Little was compelled to wait for twenty days before he could leave for Salt Lake. At the close of November, Mr. Little, in mounting a mule, put his ankle out of joint, and though the army surgeon at Fort Laramie warned him against using his foot, he started with the mail for home in early December. Much snow had fallen, and the weather was bitter cold. Contway, the Frenchman, and an Indian named Yodes were with him. When the party reached Devil's Gate, Mr. Little's foot was badly swollen, and he was obliged to do camp duty on crutches. The little company continued on until it began to storm. They were soon on a trackless wilderness of snow, with no guide marks but a few distant peaks which they recognized. "Blinded by the drifting snow-storm, they wandered too far south and into what the mountaineers call the 'Bad Lands,' southeast of the South Pass. They were destitute of sagebrush or anything that would serve for fuel. The only vegetation was a short bunch-grass. This was sufficient to sustain the animals if they could endure the piercing cold wind." Night came on and a camp was made on a hillside. It was not only very cold, but the wind was blowing hard. The men were in danger of freezing, for it was impossible to

make a fire. Their supper consisted of raw meat and a little bread. In the morning the storm was raging in all its fury. They packed their animals and travelled on, not knowing where they were. The snow was very deep, but fortunately they reached some timber before night, and camped in an old Indian lodge. About six feet of snow was cleared away and a fire made. After a good sleep they travelled on, and finally reached a trading-post on the Green River, kept by two Frenchmen. From here the party went on to Fort Bridger, where they overtook Major Holman, the superintendent of Indian affairs for Utah. They had been snow-bound for days, but Little and his men decided to continue their journey to Salt Lake City. Streams were frozen over, the storm raged at times, and, notwithstanding his weak ankle, they reached the Weber River almost in a starved condition.

The camp was finally seventeen miles from Salt Lake City. Mr. Little, after a careful consideration of all the chances of success or failure, concluded it was better for himself and companions to use what strength they had left in making a desperate effort the following day to reach the city. It was too cold to sleep much. In the morning, all prepared the best they could to take the desperate chances of the day. No one could be expected to render assistance to another. Life or death hung on the issue of that day's exertions, for the chances were against their living through the cold of another night without shelter. The mail was cached. The men pushed on, and on January 20 they arrived at the little cabin in Salt Lake City.

Such were some of the experiences on the plains in carrying the United States mail before the days of the railroad.

Mail for Fillmore and Southern Utah.—The stage-coach carried the mail into remote parts of the Territory. The roads were almost impassable at times, and during the winter months many of the towns were isolated during the period

of deep snow. The following advertisement in the *Deseret News*, in the early fifties, gives you a good idea of the cost of travelling at that time, and how mail was carried:

UNITED STATES MAIL COACH

FOR THE CAPITAL

A Semi-Weekly Line, between Salt Lake City and Fillmore, the stages conveying the UNITED STATES MAILS.

Will leave Salt Lake City and Fillmore Post Offices every Monday and Thursday, at 7 A. M. and make the trip through in three days.

Those desirous of traveling with safety and speed, to and from, the Southern part of the Territory, will do well to avail themselves of this opportunity.

Fare—From Salt Lake City to Provo.....	\$3.00
“ “ “ “ “ Salt Creek.....	6.00
“ “ “ “ “ Fillmore City.....	12.00

Fare to be paid or arranged for at the time of starting.

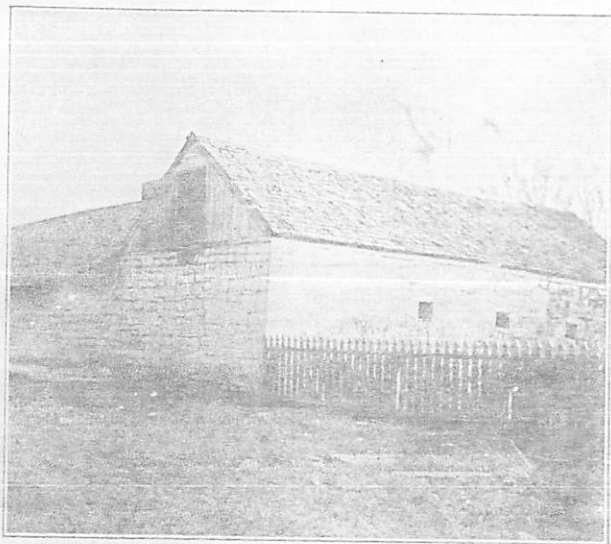
All Baggages or parcels, taken by passengers, charged extra.

JOHN M. BOLLWINKEL,
contractor.

The Pony Express.—The organization and maintenance of the “pony express” is one of the most interesting episodes in the history of the West. Organized by Russell, Majors and Waddell, it was proposed to carry the United States mail from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento in ten days. Five hundred of the fleetest horses were procured, and over 200 men employed. Eighty of the lightest men were the riders. Many portions of the route had to be traversed at a speed of twenty miles an hour. At a distance of from fifteen to twenty miles, stations were maintained for the riders and horses, and to these stations the firm was compelled to carry

hay and grain over long distances. Colonel Alexander Majors, in his *Seventy Years on the Frontier*, says:

These stations dotted a wild, uninhabited expanse of country 2,000 miles wide, infested with warlike Indians, who roamed in formidable hunting parties, ready to sacrifice human life with as little concern as they would slaughter a buffalo. The pony express was



The Pony Express Station

therefore not only important, but a daring and romantic enterprise. At each station, the thin, wiry, and hardy pony riders held themselves in readiness to press forward with the mails. These were filled with important business letters and press dispatches from the eastern cities and San Francisco, and were printed upon tissue paper, and thus especially adapted by their weight for this mode of transportation.

On March 20, 1860, the following advertisement appeared in the *Missouri Republican*:

MAIL TO UTAH BEFORE THE RAILROAD 401

TO SAN FRANCISCO IN EIGHT DAYS, BY THE CENTRAL OVERLAND CALIFORNIA AND PIKE'S PEAK EXPRESS CO.

The first courier of the Pony Express will leave the Missouri River on Tuesday, April 3, at 5 o'clock p. m. and will run regularly weekly thereafter, carrying a letter mail only. The point of departure on the Missouri River will be in telegraphic connection with the East and will be announced in due time.

Telegraphic messages from all parts of the United States and Canada in connection with the point of departure will be received up to 5 o'clock p. m. of the day of leaving, and transmitted over the Placerville and St. Joseph telegraph wire to San Francisco and intermediate points, by the connecting express in eight days.

The letter mail will be delivered in San Francisco in ten days from the departure of the express. The Express passes through Forts Kearney, Laramie, and Bridger, Great Salt Lake City; Camp Floyd, Carson City, the Washoe Silver Mines, Placerville, and Sacramento.

Letters for Oregon, Washington Territory, British Columbia, the Pacific Mexican ports, Russian Possessions, Sandwich Islands, China, Japan, and India will be mailed in San Francisco.

Special messengers, bearers of letters to connect with the Express of the 3d of April, will receive communications for the courier of that day at No. 481 Tenth street, Washington City, up to 2:45 p. m. on Friday, March 30, and in New York at the office of J. B. Simpson, Room No. 8, Continental Bank Building, Nassau Street, up to 6:30 a. m. of March 31.

Full particulars can be obtained on application at the above place and agents of the company. W. H. RUSSELL, *President*.

With the departure of the pony express rider from St. Joseph, Mo., as announced, a white steed left Sacramento for the East. With his leather pouch filled with letters he went "flying out of the town with almost the rapidity of a lightning express train." The first twenty miles were covered in fifty-nine minutes, and in changing horses at one of the stations the rider was only ten seconds. He arrived in Salt Lake

City on the 7th of April, having left Sacramento on the night of the 3d. The express from St. Joseph arrived in Salt Lake City on the evening of the 7th. The *Deseret News* of that date says that "although a telegraph is greatly desirable, we feel well satisfied with the achievement for the present." Utah was brought within six days of communication with the Missouri River, and within seven days of the nation's capital. Up to that time it had taken from six weeks to three months to receive the mail from Independence and St. Joseph. When the Civil War broke out, in April, 1861, by firing on Fort Sumter, the news was carried to Salt Lake City by pony express, and within nine days the event was known in San Francisco.

The pony ride across the continent was a lonely one. Much of the region travelled was a vast wilderness, and while there were only four military posts between the Missouri River and San Francisco, there were the smaller stations where a change of animals broke the monotony of the ride.

It mattered little whether it was night or day. Their business was to keep going, rain or shine; for every twenty-four hours a distance of 200 miles must be covered. To make the ride, it was necessary to cross many ravines, gullies, creeks, and rivers on the plains; ford a number of mountain torrents; go over parched stretches of sand and alkali, often facing clouds of dust; pass through weird and rugged canyons and gorges; and wind their way across high and difficult passes of the snow-capped Rockies and Sierras.

The most lonesome and worst part of the journey was between Salt Lake and Sacramento. For several hundred miles the route lay through a parched desolate region to the "Sink of the Carson," in Nevada. The storms were terrific at times, and yet nothing daunted the riders, and they generally carried the mail safely to its destination.

The letters were light, as they were written on tissue-paper and enclosed in a ten-cent Government-stamped envelope. It is known that some of the letters cost \$27.50 to transmit them by pony to San Francisco. The Western division of the route from Salt Lake to Sacramento was under the management of Bolivar Roberts, a prominent resident of Salt Lake City until the time of his death a few years ago. Doctor H. J. Faust was one of the most famous riders, and Thomas Dobson, who recently died in Salt Lake City, was another of the noted mail-carriers. One of his rides was a test of endurance and bravery rarely equalled in the history of the pony express. From Ruby Valley to Deep Creek in Nevada was 161 miles. The country for the most part was a hot sandy desert, and the Indians were specially warlike because of their extreme hunger. One time Dobson rode the entire distance to deliver the mail safely at Deep Creek, and was compelled to return immediately over the route without rest. During the journey he was beset with Indians many times, and it was only after the hardest riding and careful watching that he evaded his pursuers, who at one time shot three arrows into his horse, and wounded him in the leg.

The Overland Telegraph.—With the advent of the telegraph across the continent in 1862, the pony express became a thing of the past. For many years the people of Utah had desired a telegraph-line which would connect the Territory with the outside world. In January, 1853, the Territorial legislature petitioned the Congress of the United States for a telegraph-line from the Mississippi River to California. The "memorial," as it was called, says that

The inhabitants of this Territory are situated in the Great Basin of North America, occupying an intermediate position between California and the States on the Mississippi; and being shut out by their isolated position from a ready intercourse from their mother

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States; the roads passing over arid plains, rough and desert mountains taking a term of thirty days in the best seasons of the year for the mails to pass through from the confines of civilization to this Territory; and considering the obstructions arising from storms, floods, and the depredations of hostile Indians, all combining to render our means of intercourse extremely limited and precarious.

The "memorial" then asks that a telegraph-line be built by way of Salt Lake City to San Diego, San Francisco, and Astoria, and then continues:

No movement of Congress could be better calculated to preserve inviolable our glorious Union, than to bind the East and West by an ELECTRIC stream, whereby intelligence and instantaneous intercourse from the eastern to the western limits of our wide-spread country will annihilate the distance, and make the free men of Maine and Oregon, Florida and California immediate neighbors.

The Work of Edward Creighton.—Edward Creighton is called the pioneer of frontier telegraphy. In the later forties Creighton began to construct telegraph-lines on the frontier, and in 1856 he located in Omaha and built the first line that brought that city in touch with the outside world. For many years Mr. Creighton had in mind the building of a line to the Pacific coast, so he came by stage-coach to Utah and obtained the support of Brigham Young in the great enterprise. It was midwinter, but Creighton continued his journey on to Sacramento and San Francisco, where he interested the California State Telegraph Company in the enterprise. Upon his return to Omaha in the spring of 1861 he began the work of constructing the line from that city to the West. It was a quick piece of work, for within six months he had built 1,100 miles, and by October 17 had reached Salt Lake City, and one week later the California company completed their line to the Utah capital. During the period of its construction Brigham Young was a contractor, and supplied poles, subsistence, and transportation.



Building the Overland Telegraph-Line
From a drawing made by Allen True for Scribner's Magazine

Timber for the poles was obtained from Echo and Weber Canyons, and from Salt Lake City went many large wagons with supplies to the workmen in Wyoming and the mountains. The first despatch east from Salt Lake was sent during the Civil War—October 18, 1861—by Brigham Young. It was addressed to the president of the Pacific Telegraph Company, and said in part:

Utah has not seceded, but is firm for the Constitution and laws of our once happy country.

Abraham Lincoln sent the following message in reply to one sent by the acting Governor of Utah:

The completion of the telegraph to Great Salt Lake City is auspicious of the stability and union of the Republic. The Government reciprocates your congratulations.

A. LINCOLN.

During the first few months of the telegraph, it cost \$7.50 for a ten-word message to New York.

The Deseret Telegraph.—The Deseret Telegraph Company was composed of Utah men, and it was not long before this company had the remote settlements of the Territory connected by wire with Salt Lake City. The people of Salt Lake City, in a special meeting held on April 10, 1865, had voted to erect a telegraph-line through to the southern settlements. In a letter of Mr. Samuel W. Richards, written December 3, 1865, and addressed to a friend in England, he says:

Public enterprise in Utah is active. There is now being surveyed, and the poles and material being delivered upon the line, for a telegraph line through the entire route of settlements in this territory, from north to south, a distance of about 500 miles. Its advantages, connecting nearly all the settlements with this city, are obvious, and only in keeping with the general progress of the day in this country.

In the early part of January, 1867, the telegraph-line was opened to St. George, Utah, and during the same year it was extended into Idaho. In order to encourage the youth of the Territory to study telegraphy, the president of the company, Brigham Young, announced through the columns of the *Deseret News* in December, 1867, that

Wherever there is a Telegraph station established along the line, there will be one or two operators needed, and every settlement that wishes to have a station, should select one or two of its most suitable young men, and send them to this city this winter with sufficient means, to go to school to learn the art of telegraphy.

For many years the Deseret Telegraph Company remained in operation, but was eventually taken over by the Western Union Telegraph Company.

During the Black Hawk War the Deseret telegraph kept the people of Salt Lake informed concerning the movements of the Indians and their depredations in the central and southern part of the Territory.